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V I S I O N

North San Rafael

IN THE YEAR

2010

A vision is a dream about the future, shared by the community. It paints a picture of the type of place in which we want to live, work and play. Our vision is more than just a description of what we hope to see in North San Rafael. It also describes the legacy we hope to achieve and defines the way we want to work together to create a more livable community.

From the Mayor

To the San Rafael community:

November 1997

A vision is a unique process for a community. Beginning as an inspiration for change, a vision evolves into an image of what we want to create for our children and grandchildren. Because a vision reflects the soul of a community, it must be grounded in values shared by those who live here. And because a vision describes where we'd like to go in the future, it reflects the community's shared wishes and aspirations. With a vision in mind, a community can set out in a common direction, hopeful about opportunities and open to change.

Not so long ago, North San Rafael was ranch lands. Over the years, the northern half of our city has been blessed with careful planning and today the area is known for its wonderful neighborhoods, excellent schools, and beautiful hillsides. Residents are asking now: How should our community change over the next fifteen years? What can we do to keep our neighborhoods desirable places to live? How can we keep our competitive edge as a successful business center? How can we build a stronger sense of community? Where can we make a difference?

It takes foresight for a community to embark on a visioning process to answer these questions. It also takes faith in each other. For over a year, 25 people volunteered their knowledge, time and talents as members of the North San Rafael Vision Steering Committee. In the spirit of community patriotism, they worked with hundreds of people to prepare this document. Many creative and exciting concepts are described in Vision North San Rafael. At the same time, this vision is practical. It contains the direction we need to make the decisions which will make this vision a reality.

On behalf of the San Rafael City Council, we are all grateful to the many people who contributed their spirit, energy and imagination to create this wonderful vision.

Very Truly Yours,



Mayor Albert J. Boro

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Crafting the Vision for North San Rafael



North San Rafael is entering a new era. From a time of ranching days, to seeing the latest buildings take form, North San Rafael is transforming into a mature community.

The area, home to 15,000 people, is renowned for its beautiful hills, sunny weather, thriving businesses and excellent schools. *Vision North San Rafael* is a description of what the community would like for North San Rafael in the year 2010. People who live, work, shop or own property in the area helped shape the vision. Bold in its scope and approach, the visioning process successfully included more than 1,400 people at a variety of community events.

This document is organized into four parts:

Our Community Values

Our Vision is based on a statement of community-shared values. These values express how we share our community life, and what we hold most important. They define who we are and are the ultimate key to where we want to go.

Vision North San Rafael

Our Vision was written with the community. Over the years, it will serve as a catalyst for community initiatives and as direction for improvements in our neighborhoods.

Vision Concepts, Goals and Actions

During the course of the visioning process, several themes emerged as key concepts. Collectively, these concepts represent our hopes and aspirations for a beautiful, safe and close-knit community. As highlighted within, the concepts are further supported by overall goals and specific actions.

Our Implementation Strategy

As we dream about what North San Rafael will be like in the future, we look to the many different ways we can make it happen. We will work in alliance on projects, bringing together residents, employers and employees, civic groups and non-profit organizations to find ways to make the vision a reality.

Our Community Values

Our shared values guide our life together, shaping over time the foundation and character of North San Rafael. As we consider improvements and changes, we rely on the values we hold in common to help us make the best decisions. We value above all the quality of life in North San Rafael as reflected below:

Community

Respect for all people.
Safe, healthy and friendly neighborhoods.
A diverse population.
Places where we can gather.
A sense of belonging.
A hometown feeling where people know their neighbors.

Environment

Natural environment as an integral part of our community.
Protection and stewardship of our wildlife and our natural areas including the hills, creeks and wetlands.

Beauty

Beautiful natural setting from the hillsides to the bay front.
Attractive architecture and landscaping.
Well-maintained neighborhoods and business areas.

Education

Excellent schools.
Library services and easy access to information.

Resources

Valued and limited lands.
Our surrounding natural environment.
People who contribute to our community in various ways.

Vitality

Creativity and innovation.
Cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities.
Diverse local economy with variety of thriving businesses.
Variety of housing.
Ability to move around easily.

Partnerships

Participation in making decisions about our future.
Working together to meet the evolving needs of our community.
Cooperation between residents, businesses and government.

Our Vision

We are a balanced, vital and evolving community with a diverse population. We preserve the things that we have so long appreciated—our hills, wetlands and parks, safe and stable residential areas, vital diverse businesses, and convenient shopping and services.

Our entire community is beautiful and well-maintained, with excellent, well-integrated architecture, abundant landscaping, and tree-lined streets. As we come home to our clean and friendly neighborhood, we pass through attractive, distinctive gateways. Getting around our community and out to surrounding areas is easy—whether by foot, bicycle, bus, rail or car.

Our business community continues to be healthy and innovative, supporting entrepreneurship. We are known for economic stability with a full range of employment opportunities. Various vibrant centers provide opportunities for us to meet, interact and reaffirm our sense of community. We enjoy gathering together at local shopping areas, restaurants, cultural attractions and plazas.

We offer a variety of housing options for our diverse and changing population. Our concern for residents of all ages is expressed in excellent schools, libraries, youth activities, senior services, entertainment, recreational and cultural opportunities.

We gracefully adapt to changing needs of residents and businesses while respecting our environment and quality of life. Neighborhoods and businesses work together. Through cooperation, we create a community everyone loves.



Vision Concepts, Goals and Actions

Nine concepts emerged during the community process to describe the unique opportunities to build upon and enhance the North San Rafael environment and community.

Natural Environment	We will protect the beautiful hillsides, wetlands and creeks for future generations.
Easy to Get Around	We will be a safe and enjoyable community to walk and bicycle, with convenient transit and smooth traffic flow.
Northgate Promenade	We will establish a new connection from Terra Linda to the Civic Center where people can walk and ride a bike safely.
Gathering Places	We will have many opportunities for residents and workers to get together for entertainment, recreation and relaxation.
Town Center	We will create a heart to North San Rafael in the Northgate shopping area with an active mix of uses and places where everyone comes to shop, visit and celebrate community life.
Business Vitality	We will ensure that our business community is healthy and dynamic.
Homes for a Variety of People	We will have many wonderful places to live for individuals, families, people who work here and seniors.
Community Services	We will be known for our excellent library and schools, and a variety of high quality City recreation and public safety services.
Design, Beautification and Maintenance	We will have a beautiful, well-maintained community with well-designed buildings and abundant landscaping reflecting pride and care.



1
Town Center:
An attractive, thriving heart of the community

2
Terra Linda Shopping & Recreation Center:
A beautiful, viable neighborhood gathering place

3
Marin County Civic Center:
A distinctive landmark, cultural center, and community gathering place

4
PG&E Site:
Housing, neighborhood recreation, and environmental restoration

5
Fairchild Site:
A new office/light industrial complex, complementing Northgate Industrial Park

6
Marin Ranch Airport:
Unique and valuable recreational and environmental characteristics with uses consistent with the covenant



Natural Environment

North San Rafael is set in a valley surrounded on the north, south and west by expansive hillsides, undeveloped ridgelines and open space. The San Francisco Bay and waterways with wetlands and other marine habitats create the eastern boundary. Riparian habitats, scattered along creeks, are rich with wildlife, birds and native plants, and are a valued resource and integral part of North San Rafael. Retaining the beauty of the surroundings and protecting the wildlife is a high priority for our community. At the same time, however, people want to enjoy this valuable resource. Access to these areas would be balanced with the sustainability of their natural habitats. Education and stewardship are essential factors in protecting our natural environment.

Top Priority Actions

- Protect and preserve surrounding hillsides and habitats
- Increase wetlands habitats

GOAL

Protect, restore and enhance our hillsides, bayfront wetlands and creeks.

A



1. Preserve and protect the surrounding hillsides and habitat areas.
2. Protect hillsides from erosion.
3. Remove invasive plants from open space and other public and private lands.
4. Repair large eroded ravines off fire roads.
5. Protect Russom Park Creek walk by controlling creek and hill erosion onto the trail.
6. Ensure hillsides are well-maintained and fire safe.
7. Encourage regular fire safety education in schools regarding our hillsides.
8. Wherever feasible, restore and enhance the natural wildlife habitat, particularly habitat for endangered species, by providing wildlife corridors, adequate buffers along wetlands and creeks and other environmental protections.
9. Whenever feasible, seek out opportunities to protect, restore and increase wetlands habitat.
10. Restore creeks and incorporate sound flood control practices and riparian vegetation, such as at the large meadow site next to the transit line, the San Rafael Meadows neighborhood and the Valley Baptist Church (the PG&E site).

GOAL**B**

Assure that environmental considerations are always a high priority in North San Rafael.

1. Promote active community participation in maintaining and appreciating open space, such as supporting volunteer projects to care for the hills, open spaces and trails.
2. Provide innovative ways for domestic and wild animals to cross the freeway or surface roads safely. For example, consider providing a "Duck Crossing" sign on Civic Center Drive to slow traffic to allow these birds to cross safely from the Lagoon to the West side.
3. Encourage the Design Review Board to emphasize and enhance views of the hillsides, wherever possible.

GOAL**C**

Allow habitat friendly access to open space.

1. Provide opportunities for people to enjoy the natural environment.
2. Allow recreation uses in open space areas only when they are compatible with environmental protection and the sustainability of habitat.
3. Improve signage in public open space and trails.
4. Continue to prohibit motorized vehicles on hillsides.
5. Support the San Francisco Bay Trail project.
6. Retain Freitas Parkway and Del Ganado as cul-de-sacs.
7. Where possible, use bike paths with removable barriers for emergency connectors, instead of building new roads.
8. Work collaboratively with Marin County and environmental organizations to provide access and interpretive center(s) to facilitate the public's enjoyment of wetland areas, where appropriate.





Easy to Get Around

The ease, frequency and safety of getting around are important for our community. Circulation both within North San Rafael, especially east-to-west connections, and to surrounding areas such as Downtown San Rafael needs to be improved. A variety of transportation options can better link us to each other and to places we frequent. Improving the many ways we move about can help combat auto congestion.

Installing and maintaining wider sidewalks and well-landscaped walkways, separate from the main roads, will make the area more pedestrian-friendly and safer. Bicycling continues to be a highly popular way to travel in Marin County, enjoy the outdoors, and get exercise. Public transit would enable children going to school, commuters and seniors who may not want to drive a car an affordable and reliable way to get around North San Rafael. Traffic calming would be a major improvement in the community to reduce speeding and cut-through traffic, and to make the streets safer for all.

Top Priority Actions

- Create a local shuttle bus service
 - Install hike-and-bike paths throughout North San Rafael
1. Connect the Terra Linda Shopping Center and Recreation Center, the Northgate shopping area and the Civic Center with a central promenade.
 2. Connect the east and west sides of Highway 101, particularly north of Freitas Parkway, under Highway 101 from Merrydale to Civic Center Drive along the railroad tracks, and possibly along Las Gallinas Creek.
 3. Complete landscaped walkways on at least one side of all existing roads.
 4. Install walkways on both sides of new streets, where appropriate.
 5. Provide safe, well-landscaped walkways between Northgate One, Northgate Mall and Northgate Plaza.

GOAL
A Create safe, convenient, pleasant walkways throughout the community.



The reorganization and hedge screening of parking on the Old Redwood Highway frontage road could allow installation of a continuous sidewalk with tree planting and undergrounding of utilities.

6. Increase the amount of time at pedestrian crossings at Freitas Parkway intersections, especially at Las Gallinas and Freitas.
7. Design parking lots to minimize conflicts between pedestrian walkways and cars.
8. Create walkways in the area between two rows of parked cars instead of having people walk in the driving area. For example, Northgate should have automobile-free passageways between shopping areas and to the stores.
9. Where possible, locate building entrances so that people do not have to walk across parking lots to enter the building.
10. Avoid multiple driveways across public sidewalks.
11. Provide safe and inviting access from parking lots to shops.

GOAL

B

Support bicycling as a normal mode of transportation.

1. Form a bicycle advisory committee to promote public involvement and support for bicycle use, create a bicycle master plan, and pursue funding and other implementation initiatives.
2. Create bike lanes wherever possible, especially along major roads, along Nova Albion to the schools, and to the parks.
3. Install hike-and-bike paths along the promenade, and next to the railroad right-of-way in accordance with the Marin County North-South Bikeway Feasibility Study (1994).
4. Provide a setting conducive to safe and enjoyable bicycling.

GOAL

C

Create useful, convenient, local bus service, which also connects to Downtown San Rafael.

1. Create a community advisory team, including youth and seniors, to determine options for providing local bus service, to work with local public and private transportation providers and to seek funding opportunities at all levels of government.
2. Create a local bus shuttle service.
3. Encourage organizers and producers of large events at the Civic Center to provide shuttle service to the Civic Center from Downtown San Rafael and local park-and-ride lots.
4. Provide safe, comfortable and convenient bus stops.

GOAL

Preserve and support rail service through North San Rafael.

D



1. Preserve the existing rail track for future rail transit service.
2. Plan for a transit center at the junction of McInnis Parkway and Civic Center Drive.
3. Coordinate bus and train schedules. Where possible, bus drop-off and pick-up areas should be designed to minimize vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle conflicts.
4. Design attractive crossings at the transit line which are safe for pedestrians, bicycles and automobiles.
5. Minimize visual and noise impacts along the rail line.

GOAL

Create livable streets that are safe for children, pedestrians and bicycles, and reduce commuter traffic through our neighborhoods.

E

1. Slow traffic and improve safety for children, pedestrians and bicyclists by using traffic calming tools.
2. Redesign traffic circulation adjacent to the Northgate Mall areas. Consider, for example, continuing Del Presidio into the Mall's parking area rather than a "T" configuration.
3. For safety's sake, redesign Freitas Parkway between Highway 101 and Las Gallinas with appropriate signage.
4. Improve, or reduce if possible, traffic flow at North San Pedro Road and Civic Center Drive.
5. Maintain Merrydale Road and Las Gallinas Avenue in San Rafael Meadows as dead ends with no through traffic.
6. Enforce current traffic regulations to the maximum extent of the law by increasing the number of enforcement personnel and the frequency of the patrols in the critical commute times.



Northgate Promenade

Throughout North San Rafael there are many diverse neighborhoods, shopping areas and parks. Because Highway 101 physically divides our community, people find it difficult to get from one place to another by foot or on bicycle. To remedy this artificial separation, a linear parkway, or Promenade, would be created to connect the Terra Linda Shopping Center and Recreation Center to the Civic Center. A unifying hike-and-bike path—complete with attractive directional signs, landscaping, public restrooms, places to enjoy a cup of coffee, areas where children can play, public art and transit stops—would bring the community together. The Promenade will have many benefits: bringing neighbors, workers and visitors together to enjoy the outdoors, helping people get to work or shop safely on foot or by bike, and providing many opportunities for people to meet each other.

Top Priority Actions

- Construct pedestrian and bicycle pathways along the Promenade
- Create safe pedestrian connections across Highway 101

GOAL
A *Encourage bicycling and walking along the Northgate Promenade.*

1. Construct pedestrian and bicycle pathways along the Promenade.
2. Wherever possible, the pathways should be at least 12-feet wide and allow for drainage, landscaping and signage, and incorporate pocket parks.

GOAL
B *Provide linkages to other activity centers.*

1. Create safe pedestrian connections across Highway 101.
2. Provide convenient and efficient connections between popular destination points, such as Northgate Industrial Park, Vallecito Elementary School and San Rafael Meadows area.



The continuation of Del Presidio Boulevard could create a grand entrance into Northgate Mall and provide an important link in the promenade between activity areas.



Gathering Places

Gathering places provide an essential forum for social interaction and enhance a sense of shared life for the people who work, live and visit our community. Good gathering places are easy to get to and provide opportunities for a variety of activities such as shopping, eating, sitting, socializing and recreation.

Parks are wonderful places for people to get together. These facilities can be improved with picnic and barbecue areas, playgrounds and benches to encourage family events, and children's play and "hanging out" places. Outdoor music concerts, dances, neighborhood picnics and community fairs would be offered in our parks. One specific improvement many would like to see is restoring water play to Freitas Park. Others would like to have better recreation facilities in the vicinity of Merrydale Road, Los Ranchitos Road, and North San Pedro Road.

North San Rafael shopping centers can also be neighborhood gathering places. This has begun at Northgate One with the addition of a coffee shop and outdoor seating. Our shopping centers would include restaurants and cafes with outdoor eating areas, bookstores and plazas to create places with vitality and excitement. Many people want nighttime activities as well as places to go with friends at the end of the day.

Sports and recreational facilities provide special places for the community to gather and have fun. These facilities could include skateboard parks, dog parks, lighting for evening sports events, and soccer fields—each offering opportunities for the young and old alike—to spend time together and to get to know each other.

Top Priority Actions

- Establish a beautiful, viable neighborhood center and gathering place at Terra Linda Shopping Center

GOAL

A

Enhance the use of gathering places within walking distance to spark social interaction and sense of community.

1. Establish beautiful, viable neighborhood centers and gathering places at Terra Linda Shopping Center, along Merrydale in San Rafael Meadows, and at other neighborhood centers by using incentives to encourage a coordinated site design.
2. Create gathering places that include: outdoor eating places, library, schools, parks, community gardens, farmer's market, museum and transit stops, for example.

GOAL**B**

Use parks, recreation and cultural facilities as fun gathering places to enhance our sense of community.

1. Provide daytime “green spaces” which can include multi-use recreation areas, sports fields and sitting areas.
2. Improve parks by adding landscaping and amenities such as benches, public art, play equipment, gazebos and bandstands, as appropriate.
3. Encourage both daytime and nighttime gathering places, such as cafes, bookstores and restaurants.



Gathering spaces, outdoor dining areas, landscaping and signage improvements would rejuvenate the Terra Linda Shopping Center.



Town Center

A town center is a focal point where the values and history of the community are expressed and supported, where community identity is strengthened and neighborhood cohesion is fostered. It is a place where residents and workers can gather—formally and informally—to share community life. The Town Center will have public art, a wide variety of unique shops, many places to eat, and a number of entertainment options.

Our town center will be a major destination point on the promenade, a place where everyone feels welcome, something is always happening, and strolling is a pleasure. It will also include one of North San Rafael's principal gathering places—in the form of a town square! Over time, the Town Center would change, expand and evolve to become the heart of the North San Rafael community.

Top Priority Actions

- Create a sense of enclosure, pedestrian-scale and easy accessibility
- Provide high quality retail stores for local residents as well as the broader community

GOAL

A

Create an attractive, thriving heart for the North San Rafael community—a centerpiece of commerce and activity which is easy to get to—with a diversity and synergy of activities for all ages.

1. Create a Town Center with high quality retail stores for local residents as well as the broader community.
2. Allow uses that will enhance the Town Center, including retail, office, housing and community services.
3. Consider providing library services at the mall.
4. Provide planning and financial incentives to establish a Town Center.
5. Assure quality of design.
6. Create a sense of enclosure, pedestrian-scale and easy accessibility.

GOAL**B**

*Establish places
for enjoying
community life.*

1. Encourage outdoor public gathering places.
2. Improve access and pedestrian connections between Northgate One, the Mall and Northgate Plaza.
3. Consider the feasibility of providing automobile-free passage ways between shopping areas, i.e. between Northgate Plaza and Northgate Mall, and between the Mall and Northgate One.
4. Redesign traffic patterns adjacent to the Northgate Mall, and consider ways to improve the entrance into the mall.
5. Design parking lots to minimize vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle conflicts.
6. Improve landscaping and maintenance of buildings, and unify the signage and architecture at Northgate Mall.



Outdoor gathering and dining spaces at the retail centers could be encouraged, with storefronts and signage improved to match the quality of the interior spaces.



Business Vitality

North San Rafael has a very healthy, broad-based business community. Maintaining business vitality is essential for a prosperous economy. We want to keep the competitive edge of the North San Rafael business community, and to continue to enjoy the convenient local shops and employment opportunities. Local diverse businesses provide jobs for residents, goods and services for residents, taxes for City services, and donations for local schools and non-profit agencies.

Residents and workers alike would benefit from retaining homegrown businesses and industrial uses, bringing in more upscale and unique shops, and increasing the number of restaurants and cafes. The Terra Linda Shopping Center holds tremendous potential to be a thriving neighborhood center. The businesses along the Redwood Highway frontage road would benefit greatly from targeted physical improvements. Most importantly, the large vacant site on Redwood Highway where there once stood a big manufacturing plant could be home to a new office/light industrial complex complementing the adjacent Northgate Industrial Park. Of particular delight to the community would be a restaurant located here along the beautiful north fork of Las Gallinas Creek.

Top Priority Actions

- Make our business areas function better with a mix of uses, improvements to make these places more attractive, and changes that support a business-friendly community
- Ensure that environmental, traffic, design, parking and access concerns are met in all new business development



Support existing local businesses and help them adapt to the future.

1. Encourage amenities and services to support the business community such as restaurants, outdoor dining, child care and convenience retail.
2. Use incentives to accommodate growth and change of businesses.

GOAL**B**

Support home businesses, new businesses and small businesses.

1. Encourage live/work and home-based businesses.
2. Encourage incubator businesses.
3. Preserve small tenant spaces.
4. Streamline permitting and provide other incentives.

GOAL**C**

Create distinctive businesses and public complexes, and make these areas work better.

1. Improve the design and function of business areas.
2. Encourage innovation and public/private partnerships to meet parking needs.
3. Encourage property owners to maintain and remodel commercial buildings.
4. Encourage a new business at the corner of Freitas Parkway and Northgate to enhance the entryway. Appropriate uses could include office, small retail or a sit-down restaurant.
5. Ensure that environmental, traffic, design, parking and access concerns are met in all new business development or when renovation or remodeling occurs.





Homes for a Variety of People

Because of its beautiful setting, moderate climate, accessibility to natural and cultural amenities, excellent schools, and convenient location, North San Rafael is a very desirable place to live. There is a range of options for apartment dwellers, from units that are affordable to low income households to luxury units for higher income households. There are single-family homes and condominium developments, as well as senior housing, a mobilehome park, and group homes for the handicapped.

Providing more housing in North San Rafael is a challenging task. Many residents are concerned about excessive development, unmanageable traffic and the loss of views and privacy. At the same time, the limited housing supply is a major concern for the community. The supply of housing may increase by offering more variety in housing choices and by using innovative ideas such as mixed use housing, live-work units, higher density housing close to public transit, and sensitive development of unused or underutilized lands. Above all, new housing must fit in with surrounding development, and must maintain the friendly, safe character of existing neighborhoods.

Top Priority Action

- Encourage a variety of housing types, including mixed use and live/work units



GOAL *Provide homes for individuals, families, people who work here and seniors.*

1. Identify opportunities for development of housing on vacant or underutilized land.
2. Encourage second dwelling units, wherever feasible.
3. Encourage housing to be incorporated as part of renovation or redevelopment of property.
4. Promote and build partnerships with other organizations to support housing development.

GOAL**B**

Promote innovative ways to house people.

1. Allow innovative approaches to combining housing and workspace.
2. Encourage a variety of housing types, including mixed use and live/work units.
3. Where appropriate, encourage housing in gathering places, thereby adding to the vitality of these areas and facilitating the use of public transit.



Community Services

North San Rafael is a family-centered, multi-aged community with many different social needs ranging from recreational activities to informational services to neighborhood meeting places. In order to have an enriched and fulfilled community, quality activities, facilities and services are essential. Living in a safe community is critically important to North San Rafael residents, particularly in the neighborhoods and public places. Although North San Rafael is considered very safe, it is important to maintain a high sense of security by assuring excellent public safety services.

People emphasized the need for communication of information, whether by library services, computers or information kiosks. There are many opportunities for providing a City library in North San Rafael, including possible partnerships with the School Districts, the private sector and the County. A library, located west of Highway 101, would be more accessible to more North San Rafael residents, providing an invaluable community service, evening activities, and a community meeting place.

The Terra Linda Recreation Center with the city's only public swimming pool, the many pocket and neighborhood parks, and the Marin County Civic Center offer a wide range of recreational opportunities. Many people would like to improve current facilities, and to make the most of what they have in order to help enhance the sense of community in North San Rafael.

Youth in particular have varying interests and would benefit from increased opportunities to pursue these interests without having to travel too far. Our young people would like to have places just to "hang out" and get to know each other. Facilities such as a teen center, a skate park or a technology center would be ideal.

Top Priority Actions

- Provide recreational and entertainment facilities for children and youth
- Provide public safety programs
- Create a library west of Highway 101

GOAL

A Provide a public library in North San Rafael west of Highway 101.

1. Establish convenient and accessible library services for everyone in North San Rafael.
2. Form a North San Rafael Library Booster Group of teens, parents, teachers and homeowners associations.



A north San Rafael branch library west of the freeway could be located anywhere that is centrally located and provides adequate parking.

GOAL

B Encourage safe places for the young people in our community to gather and use, to explore and pursue their interests.

1. Provide and maintain recreation and entertainment facilities for children and youth such as a skate park and a teen center.
2. Encourage a variety of safe gathering places where teens can meet and socialize.
3. Promote and facilitate activities for children and youth.

GOAL

C Encourage cultural, entertainment and recreational activities.

1. Establish an annual signature community event to celebrate life in North San Rafael, and create shared memories for residents.
2. Support cultural activities throughout the community.
3. Provide a variety of facilities for cultural activities such as an art gallery, a cultural center, a band shell, or a gazebo for outdoor concerts.
4. Improve and expand equestrian connections from Los Ranchitos to the Civic Center.
5. Seek ways to enhance horseback riding opportunities in North San Rafael.
6. Support the Farmer's Market.



GOAL

D

Optimize use of all public and private sites for entertainment.

1. Maximize the use of City, religious and school facilities for cultural, educational and recreational purposes.
2. Restore the water feature to Freitas Park.
3. Maintain the restroom facilities at Santa Margarita Park.

GOAL

E

Continue to provide and enhance City services for a safe community.

1. Continue to provide and enhance public safety programs that maintain a high sense of safety in the neighborhoods and adequate public safety services, including disaster preparedness and wildfire safety.

GOAL

F

Improve communication in North San Rafael about community issues and activities.

1. Encourage information kiosks, a web site, neighborhood newsletters, and informational inserts in the local newspapers.



Design, Beautification and Maintenance

North San Rafael is blessed with a spectacular setting of open hills, large oak trees and views out to the bay. The beautiful natural surroundings form a backdrop treasured by residents, workers and visitors. Apart from the unique Eichler homes and other residential neighborhoods, many of the buildings in North San Rafael are considered bland, isolated and indifferent.

Residents yearn for an inviting, charming and attractive community. They want a place that is beautiful to live in and walk around in, one which has grown gracefully into a pretty town. A beautiful community inspires its residents. Where beauty is pervasive, inhabitants share a common pleasure and a sense of civic pride essential to community life.

To create a physical environment that is pleasing and appealing to residents, workers and visitors, the open spaces and buildings must be interesting, complex and diverse. Beautiful buildings create places to go, to see and be seen, and to be exposed to the tangible legacy of those who have gone before us. Areas such as the Town Center, Redwood Highway, Terra Linda Shopping Center, Civic Center Drive and McInnis Drive can be transformed into exciting places to explore with a diversity of buildings, beautiful architecture and landscaping, and delightful pedestrian areas.

Above all, our public and private places need to be cared for. We collectively have an investment in the infrastructure of our community. We will begin long-needed maintenance projects and repair our roads and sidewalks, irrigate our landscaping, remove the litter, and use code enforcement to keep our public places and private homes in good and safe conditions.

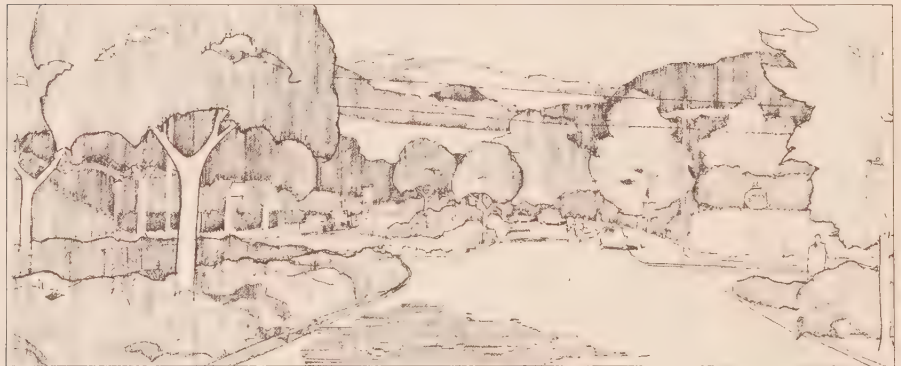
Top Priority Actions

- Improve the appearance to the Del Ganado ditch
- Underground overhead utilities

GOAL
A

Create attractive community entries welcoming all and lending an identity to our area.

1. Create a beautiful entryway to North San Rafael at the corner of Freitas Parkway and Northgate.
2. Install artistic groupings of landscaping and art on Freitas between Highway 101 and Northgate Drive.
3. At all entries and intersections, plant trees, and improve and maintain City medians and Caltrans property (including interchanges, highway frontage and parking lots).
4. Develop clear and unified signage at entries and commercial centers (perhaps with the same Mission bell signage theme found in Downtown San Rafael).
5. Improve the entry to the Civic Center from San Pedro Road.



Landscaped medians along Del Ganado could not only improve its appearance, but create safer driving conditions.

GOAL
B

Ensure clean, beautiful and well-maintained public spaces.

1. Improve the appearance of the Del Ganado ditch.
2. Begin a phased undergrounding of overhead power lines as funding becomes available.
3. Maintain roads, sidewalks and lighting.
4. Provide lighting for pedestrian walkways where acceptable to neighbors.
5. Develop realistic funding plans for maintenance and capital improvements.
6. Encourage Caltrans to remove litter from Highway 101.
7. Encourage the County to maintain the Civic Center, the Lagoon and surrounding areas.
8. Encourage the City and County to create a public/private partnership to maintain public plantings.
9. Support and encourage participation in neighborhood clean-up days.

GOAL *Improve design and function of our built environment.*

C

1. Promote design standards to unify the community and enhance a sense of connection.
2. Upgrade and unify the architecture and signage along Redwood Highway on the east side of Highway 101.
3. Improve the landscaping and sidewalks along Redwood Highway on the east side of Highway 101.
4. Coordinate design and colors at the Terra Linda Shopping Center. Signs should be removed from rooftops to under the eaves.
5. Establish a tenant identification sign for Terra Linda Shopping Center, consistent with the center's appearance.
6. Provide kiosks and maps of Northgate Industrial Park.
7. Use code enforcement to remove illegal business signs.

GOAL *Improve and expand existing landscaping.*

D



1. Improve the appearance of the northwest corner of Freitas Parkway and Northgate.
2. Provide additional landscaping to Montecillo, Freitas Parkway and along Del Ganado.
3. Provide additional trees and shrubs at Terra Linda Shopping Center.
4. Encourage native trees and plantings in parking lots, bus stops and park-n-ride lots.
5. Improve and maintain landscaping on medians and roadways.
6. Irrigate landscaping, trees and shrubs regularly, using reclaimed water where possible.

GOAL *Ensure that private spaces reflect community pride.*

E

1. Enforce San Rafael Municipal Code regulations relating to maintenance of private property.
2. Maintain the design integrity of the neighborhoods.

Our Implementation Strategy

Our Implementation Strategy outlines the basic steps which must be taken to see the vision unfold into reality. It focuses on **immediate** action-oriented cooperative activities and investments to gain momentum with quick small and large changes. These changes will become the impetus for more improvements. Other more modest **incremental** changes will have a noticeable impact on our appearance and the overall long-term health of our community.

Our strategies assume the alignment of public, private and civil sectors as well as individual commitment. The lead for different projects will come from various levels of the community and the government, and from different sectors of the economy. Separately, individuals, businesses and government are limited in what they can achieve. By sharing our resources and creating partnerships throughout the community we will guide the patterns of change in North San Rafael.

Our Vision contains several projects which are new for San Rafael. The promenade, library and neighborhood beautification depend on new funding. Fortunately, there are a variety of sources to pursue. Through cooperation and partnerships we can find the resources to make a difference in our future. It's the investments we make today that will bring us the results we envision for tomorrow.

STRATEGY

Community Participation

Organize the community to work together on Vision projects

1. Form an implementation committee to serve as 'guardians' of the vision.
2. Form volunteer action teams such as the library booster club.
3. Promote local volunteerism, such as Boy Scouts helping with landscape maintenance.

STRATEGY

Financing

Identify ways to finance the improvements in Vision North San Rafael.

1. Explore financing options, including a possible assessment or other taxing district, or a bond measure.
2. Pursue federal and state grants, as well as grants from non-profit agencies for capital projects such as traffic calming, entryway, landscaping and promenade improvements.
3. Use traffic mitigation fees to make traffic improvements.

STRATEGY

Maintenance

Maintain community improvements.

1. Identify methods for maintaining our public infrastructure.
2. Determine adequate levels of service for maintenance.
3. Seek agreement on maintenance responsibilities.

STRATEGY

Feasibility & Coordination

Look for innovative approaches and allow for flexibility in implementing the Vision.

1. Ensure that development standards are consistent with Vision North San Rafael, including standards for environmental protection, traffic, floor area ratio, density, bonuses and other incentives, design requirements for architectural excellence, and parking.
2. Create a transportation system which acknowledges a balance between our current and future land use patterns and protection of our open space.
3. As new development occurs, address transportation issues, including walkways, bikeways and, where feasible, bus service.
4. The total amount of development in North San Rafael will not cause city traffic to exceed level of service D.

STRATEGY

Partnerships

Coordinate with other organizations, and create partnerships to undertake implementation projects.

1. Coordinate implementation both at the staff and at the policy level, with the County, State and federal agencies, as well as with civic and non-profit organizations.
2. Work with the City's Traffic Coordinating Committee to begin a traffic calming program, beginning with a pilot program for Las Gallinas.

STRATEGY

Public Information

Inform the community about our Vision, and implementation projects

1. Simplify ways for the community to learn about local governmental activities affecting our community and the resources available to make things happen.
2. Provide information to the community about issues, events and places to go on an ongoing, regular basis.

STRATEGY

Policy Development

Amend the General Plan, zoning ordinance and other regulations consistent with the Vision.

1. Consider flexibility in floor area ratios in order to respond to changing business needs.
2. Marin Ranch Airport. Amend the General Plan land use designation to Parks/Open Space, and amend the General Plan policies to be consistent with the covenant.*

** The intent of the Steering Committee's General Plan recommendation is to recognize the unique and valuable recreational and environmental characteristics of the Marin Ranch Airport site. The San Rafael General Plan Parks/Open Space land use designation's allowed uses are "Dedicated parks, secured open space, and areas identified as having visual or other natural resource significance that should be protected through the development review process." In addition, the Steering Committee notes that the following uses are listed in the Declaration of Restrictions (covenant) for Marin Ranch Airport, and recommends that they be allowed as activities on the site:*

- Existing uses consisting of an airport and related uses.
 - Public utility uses as approved by the appropriate government agencies, including flood control, sanitary sewer, gas and electric, and public safety facilities.
 - Airport and airport related uses.
 - Roadways.
 - Open space.
 - Private and public recreational uses.
3. Site at 4300 Redwood Highway along the north fork of Las Gallinas Creek (Fairchild site). Allow office, light industrial, business-serving retail and service, and restaurant uses, and:
 - Prohibit big box retail.
 - Provide creek restoration and widening to handle flooding and improve habitat.
 - Assure quality building design.
 - Provide a pedestrian and bicycle path along the creek with connections to the bike path along the railroad.

4. Site on the east side of the hill off of Channing Way (Del Gatti property). Change the General Plan land use designation to clustered low density housing.
5. Site near N. San Pedro Road and Los Ranchitos (PG&E property). Change the General Plan land use designation to ensure a mix of housing, neighborhood recreational and environmental protection areas that enhance the community, and seek ways to assure that the character of the development offers a strong sense of community and identity for the site and the neighborhood. This would include the following issues, among any other potential environmental impacts:
 - Improvements to local drainage and flooding potential.
 - Architectural excellence.
 - Provision of a readily accessible, active neighborhood park or green with sports area, with a size appropriate to neighborhood.
 - Traffic impacts and access.
 - Potentially hazardous soils conditions.
 - Housing that blends with and enhances neighboring homes.
 - A variety of housing types responding to community housing needs.
 - A preference of clustering of housing in order to maximize environmental and recreational uses.
 - Environmental restoration and enhancement if feasible.
 - Potential school impacts.
 - Safe bicycle and pedestrian connections.
 - Good connections to the Civic Center and Northgate Mall.
6. McInnis Parkway. Do not extend to Smith Ranch Road, and create a turnaround area at the existing terminus of the parkway.

North San Rafael Steering Committee Members

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North San Rafael Organizations

Autodesk
Catholic Charities
Christ Presbyterian Church
Christian Church of San Rafael
City of San Rafael Volunteer Center
Congregation Rodef Shalom
Dixie Elementary School
Dixie School Board
Environmental Forum
Fair Isaac
Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods
First Congregational Church
Kiwanis
Los Ranchitos Improvement Association
Lucas Valley Homeowners
Lutheran Church of Resurrection
Marin County League of Women Voters
Marin A.I.A. Task Force
Marin Association of Realtors
Marin Builders Exchange
Marin Conservation League
Marin County Office of Education
Marin County Parks and Open Space Commission
Marin Fellowship of Unitarians
Marin Lagoon Homeowners Association
Marin County Farmers Market
Miller Creek Middle School
Miller Creek Middle School Home & School Club
Mont Marin Homeowners Association
North San Rafael Coalition of Residents

Northgate Industrial Park Business Group
Northgate Mall
Quail Hill Homeowners Association
Rafael Meadows Improvement Association
Terra Linda Valley Property Owners
R.U.F.F.S.
St. Isabella's Elementary School
St. Mark's School
San Rafael Chamber of Commerce
San Rafael City Council
San Rafael Downtown Vision Committee
San Rafael Library Board
San Rafael Park and Recreation Commission
San Rafael Planning Commission
Santa Margarita Homeowner's Association
San Rafael Sunrise Lion's Club
Santa Venetia Improvement Association
Smith Ranch Airport Pilots Association
Terra Linda High School Home & School Club
Terra Linda Homeowners Association
Terra Linda Leadership Class
United Way
Vallecito PTA
Vallecito SLT
Vallecito Elementary School
Valley Baptist Church
Villa Marin Homeowners Association
Volunteer Center of Marin
Y.M.C.A.

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The Steering Committee is grateful to Ian MacLeod for his illustrations depicting our vision of North San Rafael—may they serve as inspiration to imagine the possibilities.

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The complete vision document and Technical Appendix are available from the San Rafael Community Development Department.
For a copy, or for information about how you can participate and help to bring this vision into reality, please call (415) 485-3085.

VISION



North San Rafael

San Rafael Community Development Department

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